

Parks & Recreation Council

LOCATION:

**Alapocas Run State Park – Blue Ball Barn
1914 West Park Drive
Wilmington, DE 19803**

**Thursday, November 3, 2016
9:30 a.m.**

Council Members

Ron Mears, Chairperson
Isaac Daniels
Greg Johnson

Ron Breeding, Vice Chairperson
Jim White

Joe Smack
Jan Durham

Staff

Ray Bivens, Director
Mary Voshell
Kate Calais
Mike Hitch

Esther Knotts
Bob Ehemann
Caroline Foltz
Lindsay Robinson

Matt Ritter
Sue Staats
Kendall Sommers

Matt Chesser
Eric Dawson
James Wagner

I. Introductions/Announcements

A. Chairman Ron Mears called the Council meeting to order at 9:28 a.m.

II. Executive Session

- A. Session began at 9:30 a.m.
The Council was updated on pending litigation.
B. Session ended at 9:37 a.m.

III. Official Business/Council Activities

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ron Mears asked for Council approval of the August 4, 2016 meeting minutes. Ron Breeding made a motion to approve the minutes. Jan Durham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Chairman's Report:

Ron Mears shared regards from Councilman Shipman. Ron had seen the newspaper story regarding Baynard Stadium and talked about the tragedy which occurred at the GoApe Course. Ray shared that the Division had required an accredited investigator conduct an independent investigation of the accident. Go Ape has been a good partner throughout the process. Greg Johnson asked if any changes were made to the training, staffing levels or the course because of the accident and wondered what steps are being taken to ensure this doesn't happen again. This information is already available to the public. **The Division will send copies directly to the Council.**

C. Council Member Reports:

1. Fort Delaware Society – *No report.*

2. Natural Areas Advisory Council – *Jim White reported.*

John Williams has been appointed to represent the NAAC (Natural Areas Advisory Committee) on the Parks and Recreation Council. Jim White has been appointed to the Parks and Recreation Council by the Governor.

3. Wildlife Management Committee – *Kendall Sommers reported.*

Chris Bennett has been promoted to replace Rob Line as the manager of the Environmental Stewardship Program. Chris's former position will be posted so that there will continue to be two full time employees working for the Environmental Stewardship section. Chris recently received his pesticide applicator's license.

The Veterans Corps has been trained and are conducting a survey at the heronry at Fort Delaware. The ten member Corps will be divided into two teams of five. One team will focus on work upstate; the other team will focus its efforts downstate.

Ray shared the specifics of a voicemail from one of the hunters (Ryan) who recently participated in the managed hunt at Killens Pond. Ryan was very complementary of our staff.

Ron Mears asked if there would still be hunts for veterans at Pea Patch Island. Kendall stated those hunts take place every other year.

Ray stated that there are no plans at this time to hold Sunday hunts in parks despite the recent approval of the State law/program.

4. Resident Curatorship – *Joe Smack reported.*

The hazardous material tests were completed at the Warrington House. Lead paint and asbestos were found. The State is responsible for remediation of the property at a cost of \$10K. Work cannot move forward until a contract is signed. The couple who is interested in the curatorship submitted their work plan but neglected to include their labor costs. They are revising the plan and will resubmit it. They are contractors and are very knowledgeable about renovations. The curatorship committee will work with Greg Abbott to ensure the couple's finances are in order.

The Sussex County Land Trust has not been unable to secure the certificate of occupancy for the Wolfe House. The technology for solar composting system will not work for the site. The Land Trust would like to tie into the County's septic system and there are discussions taking place around that opportunity. There is a need to invest \$4-6K in the vent stack.

There is an upcoming meeting with the Fort Dupont Redevelopment Corporation to discuss responsibilities/curatorship at Fort Dupont.

New Jersey State Parks reached out to the Division for guidance on curatorship programs.

Eric shared that demolition is completed on the dilapidated section of the Cleaver House. The Division spent \$45K to stabilize the building and repair the roof. The Division is trying to find funding to repair/replace the windows.

Matt Ritter shared that the Division is looking to invest money into these properties in order to make them more appealing to potential curators. If we do not find curators and/or invest in these properties, these building will be lost.

5. Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds – *Ron Breeding reported.* Currently the trust fund money is split into “two pots” and is designated either for trails or for projects. Bob Ehemann is working with Greg Abbott to combine these “pots” so that money can be used without special designation.

IV. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

V. Staff Reports

1. Policy/Legislation – *Ray Bivens reported.*

The Open Space Program received no funding during the last two years. There is approximately \$1M in funding remaining. Ray has spoken to Secretary Small regarding matching grants to protect open spaces for the State of Delaware as opposed to protecting open spaces solely for State government.

In the next two years, the Division would like to have automated fee collection machines in remote area. The Director of Energy and Climate allocated \$250K to put charging stations in our parks. After these stations are installed, the infrastructure will be in place for some of the automated fee collection machines.

The Division will be writing legislation which will grant our Park Patrol Officers the authority to detain people. The Division will draft the legislation using language from the Delaware State Police cadet program.

Ray shared that Salesianum has reached a tentative agreement with the City of Wilmington to lease and manage Baynard Stadium. The proposed agreement which would still need City Council approval, would allow for a 50 year lease with an option for a 50 year renewal. The public would continue to have access to the field and artificial turf would allow more games to take place at Baynard Stadium. Ron Mears asked if the announcement will affect the money (\$200K which came from the Bond Bill) that was appropriated for the bleachers at Baynard Stadium. Ray stated that the Division bought the bleachers for \$230K. The Division would still have a presence in the area as the agreement includes the construction of a new office building and Parks’ maintenance staff would be responsible for snow removal and grounds keeping outside the stadium. Parks’ enforcement would continue to provide security during events at the stadium. The maintenance shop will be relocated if the agreement is signed.

Sue Staats stated that staff is supportive but the proposal is bitter sweet because staff takes a lot of pride in the stadium.

Ray stated that the Division is still interested in working out an agreement to transfer ownership of the Brandywine Zoo from the City of Wilmington to Delaware State Parks.

VI. Section Updates – A handout was provided to the Council and highlights were discussed.

1. Office of Administration – *Mary Voshell reported.*
Mary highlighted several entries in the handout.

Total income from the live surf tag auction which was held at Delaware Seashore State Park was \$83,650.00. Tag #1 sold for \$26,000.00.

Draft pages of the website redesign will be shared at the Feb meeting.

Mary mentioned that Cabelas will be the pilot location for point of sale transactions for annual passes. Ron Mears asked if images of Delaware State Parks are still being displayed at Cabelas. Ron Breeding mentioned that REI is also using photos of Delaware State Parks throughout their store. Ron Mears said he watched the University of Delaware online and saw many advertisements for Delaware State Parks.

Mary shared the *Hawthorne* brochure which included many of Delaware State Parks' wedding venues. Ron Mears suggested we distribute the brochures to retailers who sell wedding attire. Jim White shared that he got married 30 years ago at Brandywine Creek.

The bid opening for the Non-Motorized Water Sports RFP will take place on November 9th.

The RFP for the Fish Cleaning, Seafood, Bait and Tackle Sales and Head Boat Fishing at the Indian River Marina was advertised. The contract must be awarded by March of 2017.

The Division anticipates having the 2016 Annual Report available for the legislative season.

The AmeriCorps Veteran's Corps received the 2016 Governor's Volunteer Award.

Council members inquired about the purpose of the Youth Conservation Corps. Ray shared that the program focuses on exposing young people (ages 15-17) to natural resources conservation.

2. Operations and Programming – *Matt Ritter reported.*
Matt highlighted several entries in the handout.

Matt stated that 41% of public programs offered in FY 16 were free. He stated that if you included "roving programs" the number climbed to 65%.

Matt stated that the Trap Pond Partners are, "a great group of people, working really hard to do great things."

Matt extended kudos to Assistant Park Superintendent Mike Hitch for the incredible job he did when the Trussum Pond spillway breached.

Matt gave kudos to Lindsey Robinson for her work at the Killens Pond Healthy Kids Day.

The Division launched the Environmental Education Trailer. This mobile science lab and grant funding will allow 2000 children to experience nature at their schools' back door. The Division is attempting to find a sponsor for the trailer to provide funding which would allow more children access to the trailer.

The Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation hosted the Delaware Coastal Running Festival and shared \$2500 of their proceeds with other Friends' groups. In addition, the Foundation received a \$50,000 grant from the Crystal Trust to assist with the restoration of a tower at the seashore.

Secretary Small attended the Fort Miles Artillery Park ribbon cutting and commented that the event was one of the best he had seen in his career.

Caroline Foltz received kudos for her work on the second annual Boo-B-Q. A portion of the profits from this event (\$20,000) will be deposited into the John & Linda Hollis Children in Nature Endowment.

This year marked the 4th anniversary of the Alapocas Run Pawpaw Festival.

The Analog-A-Go-Go event generated \$10,000 for the Friends of Bellevue State Park and the Division will receive \$35,000 for hosting the event. Council member Isaac Daniels attended the event and said it was a great day, stating, "great food, great beer, no complaints". Representative Heffernan also attended the event and later contacted the Division to inquire as to the cost of putting bathrooms in the Figure 8 Barn.

The Vendemmia da Vinci Wine and Food Festival won *Delaware Today's* "Best Outdoor Festival". Council member Joe Smack attended the festival and congratulated Park staff on the great job they did with managing traffic. He stated that Bellevue is a very accommodating location and that people really enjoyed the event.

Matt stated that the concert series brings approximately 50, 000 people to Delaware State Parks.

3. Planning, Preservation and Development – *Matt Chesser reported.*
Matt Chesser shared highlights from the handout.

A briefing was held with stakeholders regarding the Tri-Valley Trail project. Additional surveys will be completed.

A meeting was held with stakeholders regarding the new trail at Killens Pond. The Division is looking to build a safe connection on the road near the boat ramp.

Matt Chesser shared that Ron Vickers retired effective October 1st. This is a huge loss for the Division.

The Bethesda Church parking lot and connector are complete.

The Delaware Symphony would like to name the NVF amphitheater “the home” of their 2017 concert series.

Jim White asked if the Division has considered cutting back “hay” to one crop per year. Kendall said the Division will be revisiting our agriculture leases soon. Eric Dawson stated the one of the goals is to have more meadows along trails.

Jim White asked for an update on the trail at Auburn Heights. Matt Chesser stated that at the Oversee Farm site, the trail is under construction and is scheduled for completion in December. The trail across the street from Auburn Heights is complete and open to the public. A \$3.5M wetland remediation will begin in December. Also in December, the Division will advertise the bid request for the trail/bridge project (to connect the two loops).

Greg Johnson stated that he and Jim White are on the committee to review the Tri-Valley Trail Plan. He stated that the Division is doing a good job with this project. The meetings are well-run and well-thought-out, every detail is being considered. Matt Chesser commented that this has been very inclusive and Ray stated that more work has gone into this trail than any other trail in our system.

Delaware Greenways is working on a plan to start connecting the trails along Valley Road with the Newark trail system.

4. Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT) Grants - *Bob Ehemann reported*

Bob and Ray attended the grand opening of the Glasgow Regional Park and the High 5 Playground geared for the inclusion of autistic children.

The Division presented the City of Dover with a check to assist in building the Mallard Pond playground.

Bob provided the Council with a graph regarding the performance of the funds in the Division’s endowment accounts. Discussion ensued.

Ron Mears asked for an update on the City of Wilmington skate park project. Bob said the City is still in negotiations with DELDOT over the 25 year lease for the land so currently money has not been allocated for that project.

VII. **Old Business**

1. Ray Bivens shared a draft of the sponsorship policy. He asked the Council to review the draft and send comments to Esther in the next two weeks. Other state park systems have requested that we share our policy with them. Ron Mears asked at what level the Division will be involving the Parks Council in the sponsorship decision. Ray stated that all “sizeable requests” will come before the Council and shared that someone has approached the Division regarding putting in a bathroom at the Junction Breakwater Trail. If the donor wanted to put a name on the bathroom, the Council would be

included in that decision. Ron Breeding asked who is on the committee. Caroline Foltz stated that the committee consists of internal staff.

Ray introduced Caroline Foltz, the Division's Enterprise Development Coordinator. Ray stated that she holds a unique position not found in any other state park system. He shared examples of the types of work Caroline will be doing including developing a partnership to find an operator to repair and open the Krapf property as a bed and breakfast.

Caroline shared a list of projects that she is currently working on. She highlighted the Division's partnership with DEDO and their plans to allow Parks to be included in an upcoming Economic Impact Study. Greg Johnson stated that inclusion in that study is "significant" and has been needed for years.

Many of the Division's staff attended a Baltimore Orioles baseball game and an Aberdeen Ironbirds game. Both events provided excellent marketing opportunities.

Eric Dawson and Matt Ritter have been researching the naming rights policies of other state park agencies. Many of those policies ban naming completely. This is a challenge for Delaware State Parks because of the sponsorship program. Matt and Eric are working to develop a draft policy. The Greenways and Trails Council voted unanimously to name the Wendell Cassel Trail in honor of a past volunteer. Ray stated that the Parks Advisory Council and Greenways and Trails Committee are at odds in this area. Ray invited Park Council members to attend one of the Greenways and Trails meetings. Ron Mears said that even if we have a policy in place, legislation can be written which would override the Council's request to ban/limit the naming of facilities. Eric stated that all of the policies he has seen stipulate that if an individual or organization names a facility, they are responsible for the maintenance of the facility for the next 10 years. Greg Johnson stated that at the University, agreements are written so that names do not remain on facilities in perpetuity. Matt Ritter stated that Louisiana's governor is pushing to change the names of State Parks and to name them after organizations (i.e. Bank of America State Park).

Ray Bivens stated that he wants to improve deer management statewide." Managed hunts are not controlling the deer population. Managed hunts are labor intensive and the Division has been exploring a process which is akin to an agriculture lease. The Division would go out to bid to work with a partner on certain parcels of land. This would not eliminate public hunting. At this point, a member of the catering staff abruptly joined the meeting and stated, "you need to let nature conserve itself". She shared her indignation over the fact that the Division is attempting to manage the deer populations and abruptly left the room without allowing the Director to respond.

Kendall shared that there are 3 sites being considered for hunting leases: the Godwyn Tract in Sussex County, a parcel in Kent County managed by Killens Pond and a location near Sunset Lake managed by Lums Pond. Two additional sites are also being considered, one in Sussex County and one in New Castle County. This approach is not about revenue but about our need to manage the deer population. Any revenue generated would go directly to the Environmental Stewardship fund. If successful, this process could be used in 15-20 sites within Delaware State Parks. .

Ray stated this could work at Fort Delaware as well. This will also allow the Division to receive more accurate counts of the number of deer being harvested. The Environmental Stewardship Program has met with Becky Lovin, the Division's paralegal, to start drafting a proposed hunt lease for the first of the three parcels of land. The first area will be located in Sussex County. Ray asked for feedback from the Council.

Ron Mears stated that years ago the Division did biological studies and deer counts. Kendall stated that because of staff shortages, the Division has not done spotlight counts in about 3 years. She thinks they are important in providing trend information and the Division has scheduled spotlight surveys to begin in the northern parks this year. Ron Mears would like to know the number of deer taken in specific sites. Kendall agreed. Ron Mears asked if we have problems with deer killing flora and fauna; Kendall stated that it continues to be an issue.

Hunting has stopped at the First State National Park. This has caused issues in our Parks. Fish and Wildlife staff is working with the new director at the national park to provide data for a deer management plan.

There are a number of special hunts planned for the 2016-2017 hunting season. Special Youth Hunts are scheduled as follows: Trap Pond and Fort DuPont- December 10th, Lums Pond and Killens Pond- December 17th and White Clay Creek- November 5th.

Managed hunts are scheduled as follows: Killens Pond - October 24th and January 17th, White Clay Creek - January 5th, Brandywine Creek - December 15th & 16th, and Thompson Island - January 11th, 18th, & 25th.

Environmental Stewardship Program staff conducted day long training for this year's Veterans Corps. A week long field training is scheduled for the end of October.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been confirmed in Hockessin by the Delaware Department of Agriculture. In August, a single adult male was found. The Division is trying to determine a course of action to protect trees on our properties. There is a possibility of treating/inoculating the Ash trees but it is very expensive. The Division has a study underway to try to determine what the canopy would look like if we lost all of our Ash trees. In addition, we are trying to determine which trees must be saved. EAB can travel to new areas by natural means, as well as on firewood, timber and nursery stock. The EAB feeds under ash tree bark during its larval stage, which damages and eventually kills the trees. Adult EABs emerge in the spring and mate shortly thereafter, with each female laying 60 to 90 eggs in a lifetime. In the spring, pupae transform into adults and emerge through "D"-shaped exit holes. To understand the potential impact of the insect on our interior/riparian forests, Environmental Stewardship staff is conducting ash tree surveys in our northern parks. The treatment of champion/signature trees in our active recreation areas is being considered also being considered.

Environmental Stewardship staff participated in the Delaware Invasive Species Annual Meeting. This meeting brings together natural resource specialists throughout the

state. Topics at this year's meeting included EAB, Phragmites control, Invasive Species Control Prioritization and a pesticide demonstration.

Chris Bennett, Environmental Stewardship Program's Natural Resource Specialist, completed the Delaware Pesticide Applicator Certification for the following application categories: General, Forestry, Ornamental & Turf and Aquatics.

VIII. New Business

IX. Upcoming Events

- A. Election of Council officers will take place at the February meeting.
- B. Dates were determined for the 2017 Council meetings (February 2, May 4, August 3, November 2).
- C. Council discussed possible locations for future meetings. Ron Mears will check on a location for the February meeting which will take place in Dover. Ray suggested the May meeting be held at Deerfield so that Council can tour the Tri-Valley Trail. The August meeting will take place at Cape Henlopen so that Council can visit the new campsites.

Greg Johnson's brother in law is the Indiana State Tourism Director. He gave Delaware State Parks a "shout out" at the National Association of State Park Directors annual conference.

X. Meeting Adjournment

The chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Ron Breeding made a motion to adjourn, Joe Smack seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.